



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: "Surrender: Serving the Savior"
"Rejecting the King." Text: *Matthew 22.1-14*

□ **Day #1—Monday, October 12th. Read: Matthew 22.1-3. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

As we have discussed in the past, Jesus often taught using parables. Parables are short stories using circumstances and situations in Jesus' day, illustrating a spiritual reality. Our text for this week is referred to as, "The Parable of the Wedding Banquet." Through this parable, Jesus is warning (describing) that the Kingdom of Heaven (God's rule, salvation—Jesus Himself!) is in the world and those who had been invited—the nation of Israel generally, and religious leaders specifically, had rejected this divine invitation to enter into the Kingdom!

Similar to the previous parable in Matthew 21, Jesus is being very clear and direct about the danger of this rejection, as well as God's desire that all people come to Him and join the kingdom party! New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg helpfully describes the opening illustrations in Jesus' parable:

As in 18:23–35 and regularly in rabbinic parables, the king stands for God. A wedding banquet frequently depicted the fellowship of the Messiah with his people at the eschatological consummation (recall 8:11; cf. Luke 13:29; Rev 19:9). After 21:37 it is natural to take "son" as a reference to Jesus, but nothing more is made of it in this context. The servants may or may not be meant to stand for God's messengers (as, e.g., the angels; cf. 13:39). The people originally invited to the banquet clearly represent Israel. Their reaction to the king's invitation proves shocking on both the natural and spiritual levels of the story. "They refused" is, more literally, *they were not willing*. The sending of the servants corresponds to the standard Oriental practice of issuing an invitation to an event without specifying the exact time until a later date.¹

The image of a wedding feast is a common metaphor for the Kingdom of God, and similarly, the Messianic Banquet. A feast, or banquet, symbolized the blessings of God's presence and salvation. In a culture where food and drink were typically scarce, a lavish feast was a picture of having what you needed to live and survive, as well as the joy and thanksgiving that attended such blessings. Additionally, banquets were a highly social event where family and friends celebrated together and honored each other. In the parable, Jesus describes this banquet as a wedding feast. According to Craig Keener, wedding feasts...

...were frequently large gatherings; a very wealthy person could invite an entire city to one. Coming to a wedding feast required some commitment of valuable time on the part of guests (Jewish hearers would assume a feast lasting seven days, and a king would expect his guests to remain throughout the feast); this commitment would be difficult for peasants working the land. But the honor of being invited by a king—and the terror of displeasing him—would have motivated intelligent invitees to attend. The invited guests may have been aristocratic landowners anyway (22:5), who had the leisure for such activities. Following the custom, a preliminary invitation had already been sent (hence "those who had been invited"); the potential guests thus had no excuse.²

Consider/Reflect: "A Jewish wedding (Heb. *ḥatunnâ*) was a sacred affair, in which the wife was separated to the husband through the wedding ceremony (*qiddušîn*, "sanctification"), which in later Talmudic times was formalized when the groom recited to the bride: "You are sanctified to me in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel (*h. Qidd. 5b*). In the case of a king's son's wedding, this would be a country-wide celebration that would go on for several days."³

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, October 13th. Read: Matthew 22.4-6. —Examine: The Text and its Message.**

One very common aspect of Jesus' parables was reversal; some part of the parable that would be the *reverse* of what was common or expected. For example, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the father, who was rejected and shamed, runs out to his wayward son. This would not be the usual situation in the first century world! In this parable, the king at first exercises an unusual amount of patience that would *not* be the common practice when his people rejected the invitation to his son's wedding! However, this patient king...

¹ C. Blomberg. *Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992).

² C.S. Keener. *The IVP Bible background Commentary: New Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1993).

³ C.E. Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan, 2002).

...sends his servants yet again to summon those originally invited. He explains how sumptuous the feast will be. He has had all the best food prepared, and now everything is ready. The language of v. 4 echoes Christ's emphasis on the kingdom of God being at hand. *Some*...however, pay no attention to the servants (v. 5). They compound their culpability by adding apathy to rejection. "They paid no attention" is, more literally, *they didn't care*. The ordinary activities of life, both rural and urban, and especially business and money matters, take priority over loyalty to their king. "The rest" do not simply ignore the servants; they prove actively resistant and hostile (v. 6). Their response is just conceivable at the literal level of the story as treason and revolution. But Jesus' point obviously concerns the spiritual level. God's emissaries, as in the parable of the wicked tenants, are mistreated and even killed.⁴

Of course, Jesus is illustrating the upside-down nature of God's grace and patience! As with the previous parable, Jesus describes the hostile rejection of God's will and ways (the Kingdom) by both the enemies of God *and* His own people! Yet, God will not give up trying to reach His people with mercy and grace! As Jesus tells this story...

Jesus had in mind the effect of the nation's rejection of Him. God had made plans for His Son's millennial reign and the invitation had been extended. But the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples had largely been ignored. The nation would even kill those extending the offer. Finally in A.D. 70 the Roman army would come, kill most of the Jews living in Jerusalem, and destroy the temple.⁵

Consider/Reflect: "Some of those invited to the feast ignore the second invitation. Others greet these messengers with violence. Such refusals represent Israel's reaction toward the prophets sent to them. "The cause for this contempt for the Word is not God's foreknowledge, but the perverse human will. The human will rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Spirit, which God offers it through the call. It resists the Holy Spirit, who wants to be effective, and who works through the Word' (FD SC XI 41)."⁶

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, October 14th. Read: Matthew 22.7-10.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The king's patience has come to an end. Not only do the invitees "reject the king's second invitation with trivial substitutes of everyday affairs (e.g., farming and business); others actually abuse and kill the king's messengers. This is an unthinkable insult to the king, who now finally brings judgment on his insubordinate subjects for the most serious treason and revolt against the monarch."⁷ The king now sends his servants out to invite any and all who are willing to come to the feast! The king's long-suffering patience and mercy of the king now extends to those not previously invited. Notice the tissue of *worthiness* (v.8). Those invited proved *not worthy* by rejecting the call/invitation; those now being invited are likewise *not worthy* (not the initial, invited community) but are invited nonetheless. It is not about *worthiness*; it is about the *worthiness and mercy of the king!*

The situation having gone beyond that at normal wedding banquets, these shocking developments make their points that much more effectively. The king sends his servants to *tas diexodous tōn hodōn* ("street corners," v. 9)—probably the forks of the roads, where they would find many people. They extend the king's invitation to all and succeed in drawing in all kinds of people, "both good and bad" (v. 10). That Jesus is reported as saying this in Matthew clearly shows that the superior righteousness (5:20) believers must attain to enter the kingdom is not merely rigorous obedience to law. After all, this Gospel promises a Messiah who saves his people from their sins (1:21; 20:28).⁸

As was mentioned yesterday, v.7 is often understood to be a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. However, as Blomberg notes, the judgement imagery "actually parallels stereotypic Old Testament and intertestamental descriptions of destruction in war (cf. Judg 1:8; Isa 5:24–25; 1 Macc 5:28; *T. Jud.* 5:1–5) and is not as detailed or accurate (the temple, not the entire city, was burned) as one would expect...Still, the Roman invasion of Jerusalem may be seen as a partial fulfillment of the principles enunciated here, even if Jesus had Judgment Day more prominently in mind."⁹

The king cannot tolerate an empty banquet hall; he seeks new guests. He now extends his invitation indiscriminately to the riff-raff of society as well as anyone else happening to be on the streets...As in the previous two parables, none of the imagery explicitly extends the offer of the kingdom beyond the people of Israel, but the principle of inviting outcasts makes natural the transition from those rejected within Judaism to the Gentile world. Interestingly, Jesus declares that the originally invited guests are *unworthy* ("did not deserve"), tying in with Matthew's favorite theme of worthiness (cf. 3:8; 10:10–11, 13, 37–38)...the worthiness or unworthiness in view here has to do with one's response

4 Blomberg, *Matthew*.

5 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck Eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

6 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

7 Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*.

8 F. E. Gaebelin, Ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

9 Blomberg, *Matthew*.

to the proclamation of the gospel. These last approached do respond properly, and the kingdom now issues forth in a plentiful community.¹⁰

Consider/Reflect: “In the Gospels God’s “call” is an invitation, but more. It’s a command and requires a decision. The invited in Jesus’ parable had the freedom to refuse to come... The king not only invites his guests again and again, but carefully describes the celebration to make it as inviting as possible. Only when the invitation is rejected and the king’s messengers (Here, the prophets?) rejected, does the king act against those who reject him.”¹¹

□ **Day #4--Thursday, October 15th. Read: Matthew 22.11-12.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The parable’s focus now turns to a guest who was attending the wedding banquet but was not wearing the appropriate wedding garment. What is this garment about? On a literal level, some scholars believe that it could be a festive garment provided by the king for people to wear, or, the implication is that the guest is wearing soiled or generally inappropriate clothing. In either circumstance, there is a self-centered, dis-honoring of the king—which in reality is the root of sin! C.E. Arnold notes that...

Although the invitation was given to all, both good and bad, proper attire is expected. Drawing on some evidence for a king in the ancient world supplying festal garments for guests (Gen. 45:22; Est. 6:8–9), some have understood this as an allusion to the imputed righteousness that Jesus hinted at early in his ministry (Matt. 5:20), and which Paul will later enunciate (e.g., Rom. 3:21–31; 4:22–25). Others suggest this refers to clean garments as opposed to dirty ones, symbolizing not works meriting salvation but evidential works of righteousness. In any case, since the individual is addressed as “friend” and is left speechless when confronted by the king (22:12), the implication is left that the guest had proper clothing available, but declined to wear it. This once again points to the culpability of both the privileged religious leaders, the populace in Israel, and even Jesus’ professing disciples such as Judas (called “friend” in 26:50), which is the point of all these parables.¹²

Consider/Reflect: “Israelites expected invited guests to wear festive wedding garments, which the host could provide. Thus, this fellow’s failure to dress in appropriate clothing, which was freely given to him, offends the host. This garment signifies the righteousness of God, which covers our sin (cf Is 61:10; Gal 3:27).”¹³

□ **Day #5— Friday, October 16th. Read: Matthew 22.13-14.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The lack of an appropriate wedding garment leads to a serious consequences. The invitation to the feast, the invitation into the Kingdom of God, is just that—an invitation, *a call*. We enter by grace and mercy alone. Moreover, when the answer is to attend the feast, to enter into the kingdom, there are now expectations of how we are to act as “guests” in the kingdom. This is the life of discipleship, of obedience to the King—like wearing the proper “garment” to demonstrate our gratitude and surrender! As commentator R.T. France believes, Jesus’ parable is a lesson that...

...though entry to God’s salvation is free for all, it is not therefore without standards, or to be taken lightly. The warning that the new tenants must produce the fruit (21:41, 43) is here reinforced. It was the claim to belong without an appropriate change of life which characterized the old Israel and brought about its rejection; the new people of God must not fall into the same error. The *garment* should probably not be pressed further than this to represent specifically repentance, or justification, or any specific ‘works’; it is simply a life appropriate to one of God’s new people. Without it, there can be no guarantee of security, as 7:13–27 has already made clear...As in the parables of the weeds and the net, it is only the final judgment which will reveal who are the true guests at the banquet.¹⁴

Jesus ends His parable with a summary statement. Many heard the call of the king but rather tended to their own lives, ignoring the call. Some heard and answered the call, and entered into the banquet (the Kingdom), but in one instance, the response was half-hearted faithfulness—which is really *faithlessness*. The message of *v.14* “is that of the parable of the sower: there is many a slip between initial response to the gospel and ultimate fruitfulness.”¹⁵ Likewise, according to D.A. Hagner...

This final parable of the series of three focuses on the general unresponsiveness of the people of Israel generally and not merely the leadership of Israel. Ironically, the “chosen people” show in their refusal of the invitation that they are *not* all among the “elect” but only among the “called.” Those initially invited are accordingly designated as “not worthy,” and the invitation is broadened to include all, the “bad” as well as the “good,” and by implication, finally, Gentiles as well as Jews. Those who would come must nevertheless respond appropriately, i.e., in a discipleship that

10 Ibid.

11 L.O. Richards. *The Bible Reader’s Companion* (Victor Books, 1991).

12 Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*.

13 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

14 R.T. France. *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, 1995).

15 Ibid.

produces the righteousness of the kingdom. In the end, although all are invited, not all will show themselves to be truly among the “elect.” The pericope thus contains not only the good news of an open, rather than a restricted, invitation but also the sobering reminder of the seriousness of discipleship for those who respond. Matthew never tires of the theme of the righteousness of this discipleship—that of the kingdom of God.¹⁶

Consider/Reflect: “Though God earnestly invites all to His Son’s feast, some refuse to accept His invitation and so fail to enjoy its richness. Coming from a long line of believers does not guarantee anyone a place in God’s kingdom. Ingratitude and presumption ever threaten to lead us away. Though we in no way deserve mercy, the Gospel earnestly invites us to come and join the Lord in His eternal heavenly banquet. [Pray]: Heavenly Father, thank You for preparing a table before us in the presence of our enemies and graciously calling us to dwell in Your house forever. Amen.”¹⁷

□ **Day #6-Saturday, October 17th. Read: Psalm 23. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the *Daily Order of Prayers* from *Luther’s Small Catechism*. Read and mediate on Psalm 23 and...:

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.¹⁸

Consider/Reflect: “In faith, David declares that since Yahweh is his shepherd, he “shall not want” (v 1). Our Good Shepherd lovingly provides everything that we need in this life, but we often fail to recognize that these gifts come from Him. Instead, we focus on things that we want, but do not need. How wonderful that our Shepherd does not withhold His blessings from us, but still cares for these needs and more: He gives us His own Son! [Pray]: Good Shepherd, open our eyes to see Your blessing. Open our ears to hear Your voice. Open our hearts that we may love You. Amen.”¹⁹

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...
Sermon Series: “Surrender. Serving the Savior.”
Scripture Texts:
Isaiah 45.1-7
1 Thessalonians 1.1-10
Matthew 22.15-22

¹⁶ D.A. Hagner. *Word Biblical Commentary*: (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993).

¹⁷ *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

¹⁸ Martin Luther. “*Luther’s Small Catechism*.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

¹⁹ *The Lutheran Study Bible*.